2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

II. CHAṬIAR, CEREMONIAL CLEANSING

a. Janam chaṭiar, ceremonial cleansing after birth[1].

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Children are named after (i. e. born into) the sept of their father, not after that of their mother. When a child is born in a village, this village becomes ceremonially unclean; therefore they do not perform any bonga-worship until the uncleanness has been blotted out. And where a child is born, this house becomes unclean; therefore until the uncleanness is wiped out, no inhabitant of the village will eat or drink in this house.

When a boy is born, they shave on the fifth day, and if it is a girl on the third day. On the day of shaving the father of the child calls on all, (also) poor people, to be shaved. 852 They come together at his house; when all are come they set a barber to do the shaving. First of all he shaves the village priest, thereupon the field priest, thereupon the village headman, the deputy headman, the headman of morals and his deputy and the messenger of the village headman, and thereupon all the men of the village and last of all the father of the child.

Now the barber calls for the new-born child. The woman who has worked as midwife carries the child in her arms out to the door, bringing along two leaf-cups, one leaf-cup with water and one to put the hair in. The barber shaves the child[2]; when this is done, the midwife puts this hair in the leaf-cup; thereupon she binds two threads on the arrow with which she cut the umbilical cord when the child was born. Now the child's father fills oil in the leaf-cup and calls on the men of the village to come along with him to a place where they can go down to the water. They go along. When they come back after having bathed, the midwife takes along with her oil and turmeric and the arrow on which the two threads are bound, and calling on the women of the village to come along she takes them to the watering-place to bathe. They go there. At the place of bathing the midwife throws one thread together with the child's hair into the water and lets it float away, after she has made five marks of sindur at the descent to the water. This they call to buy way down to water. The other thread and the arrow she washes and brings with her back to the house, when all of them have bathed. Arrived to the house the midwife immerses the remaining thread in turmeric(water), and this she makes into

[1] The word is possibly to be connected with H. *chaṭhī*, the sixth (day after birth, when the house is cleaned, the child named, and so on). [2] The whole head.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

852 a loin-string round the waist of the child. After this the child's mother sits down under the eaves of the house and takes the child in her arms; and she takes some atnaḱ leaves[3] together with her child in her arms.

Now the midwife kneads some cow's dung with water on the eaves, and lets also some dung-water drip down on the child's mother; and receiving some dung-water in her left hand she daubs her head with it and sucks a little in. The child's mother then goes inside and lays the child down on a bedstead. Now the midwife mixes flour in water in three leaf-cups; the flour-water of one cup she sprinkles on all the four legs of the bedstead and thereupon throws this leaf-cup away. After this she sprinkles the flour-water of another leaf-cup first on the village priest, after him on the field priest, after him on the village headman, after him on his deputy, the village headman of morals and his deputy and on the messenger of the village headman, on their breasts. And after these on all the men of the village, on their breasts.

Thereupon she sprinkles the flour-water of the remaining leaf-cup, first on the wife of the village priest, after her on the wife of the field priest, after her on the wife of the village headman, after her on the wife of his deputy, after her on the wife of the headman of morals and on the wife of his deputy, and after her on the wife of the headman's messenger, and after these on all the women of the village, on their breasts.

Now the husband and wife of the house ask each other: Whom shall we name? Then they say if it is a boy: We shall name father, or in case it is a girl: We shall name mother. The first born boy gets the name of his father's father, and the first girl gets the name of her father's mother. The second born gets the name of his mother's father, and the second girl the name of her mother's mother. Those who come afterwards get the names of the brothers and sisters of the father and mother.

Now the midwife comes out into the courtyard, and telling them the name she greets them one after the other and says to them: From to-day please call out to him using this name when hunting and chasing, in case it is a boy, and if it is a girl: Come along you, if you will go and fetch water.

Thereupon they bring gruel with nim[4] in leaf-cups out to the courtyard. They give it first to the village priest and the other village officials in the order mentioned, and after these to all the men of the village. Afterwards they give the village priest's wife and so on all the women. Now the defilement is wiped out, and the child has come in among its relatives. Five days later the barber and the midwife again shave the child alone. Then all is finished.

759 What the midwife by customary right gets is as follows: When a boy is born, she gets a piece of cloth, three cubits long, and one maund (i. e., nearly 40 kg) paddy and one wristlet for cutting the umbilical cord; and if it is a girl, she gets a piece of cloth, three cubits long, twenty seers of paddy and one wristlet for cutting the umbilical cord.

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[3] Terminalia tomentosa, W. & A. [4] Melia Azadirachta, L. (Melia Indica, Brandis).

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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stock, to the chief presiding deity, *Marañ Buru*, and ancestor-spirits of the family, uttering suitable incantations so that the baby may prosper in life and have no diseases.

The child, if a male one, now receives his name after his grand-father; and if a female, after her grand-mother on the paternal side. Now follows a general drink of rice-beer and a tribal dinner. The midwife, who generally receives a fee of eight annas if the child is a female one, and ten annas and a *baru* (brass-plate) if a male, will now, on her part, invoke *Marañ Buru* and the dead ancestors of the father of the child at the village bathing-ghat, throw the leaf-cup in water, bathe and return home.[1]

Between the third and the fourth year, children of both sexes have their ears bored by their grand-mothers or elderly female relatives by means of a brass-needle. It is a quiet domestic ceremony and no invitations are issued outside.

Caco-Chatiar

The second critical period in the life of the Santal is sought to be guarded by a purificatory ritual called Caco-chatiar. This ceremony may be observed any time before marriage and is in effect, the admission

1 The midwife's fee for the next male child is 8 ans. and 6 ans. for a female.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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with which the leaves of Nim tree (Melia azadirachta, L) have been mixed. After this they all take a draught of their home-brewed liquor and depart.

On the fifth day the child is given its name. Should it happen to be a son and heir he takes the name of his grandfather; should he be the second son born, he takes the name of his maternal grandfather: and thus the paternal grandfather's brother for the third boy, the maternal grandfather's brother for the fourth boy and so on. The same procedure is followed for girls, the feminine relations being in the same order from the female side.

Chacho Chhatiar: It is a very important ceremony of the Santals, which enables the individual to take his place in Santal society and participate in its rights, rules and ceremonies. Without this no Santal can be married or cremated; if anybody dies without this ceremony he is buried. There is no age limit for this ceremony though it must precede marriage. Generally the Santal performs this ceremony for several children at the same time.

Mr. O'Malley has given a full description of this ceremony in the District Gazetteer[1] in the following words. "The father brews handi and provides oil and turmeric for the villagers. When the handi is ready he calls the manjhi and paranik in the morning and gives them a drink. They ask him what handi it is, and, after drinking, the headman bids the godet call the villagers together. When they have come the girls of the village anoint the naeke and his wife, who sit

[1] L.S.S.O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetters (Santal Parganas) pp. 132-133.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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852 on a mat, with oil and turmeric; next the kudam naeke and his wife, then the manjhi and his wife and all the officials in the same order as at the janam chhatiar: last of all, all the women are anointed. The handi is now served in leaf cups to the manjhi and paranik and then to the other people; after which all are ready for further proceedings. They ask how many children the handi is for, and for each child four small leaf cups are given to all those present. Then they ask the father: "How many iri (Panicum crus-yalli) and how many ebra (Setaria Italica) ears have ripened for you?" This is a figurative expression for "How many boys and girls have you?" On receiving an answer they ask again, "Where is the land?" The father tells them where the namesakes of the children live, whereupon they call for "namesake handi", i.e., beer which the namesakes present have brought with them. The people then sing a special song and dance and drink.

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[792] A guru, who in a way officiates for the father of the family, now starts the binti, i.e., a mythical historical recitation. He begins with the creation of the earth and relates the Santal history of mankind, their wanderings, etc., according to tradition, and recounts how their ancestors spread abroad, some of them coming to Sikhar, where the first pargana was Hikim, who said to the people: "Let us settle here; we have found primeval forest and virgin soil". The ancestors said, "Let us help him; we will burn and clear jungle, we will live and prosper". Then they came to their present abode and married, cleared jungle and multiplied. Thereupon the guru on behalf of the family enters into a colloquy with the people, in which

4: Biswas D, F.-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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inter alia he says, "We implore you to let us be with you to brew and drink beer, to fetch water, to pin leaves together on the day of marriage, the day of chhatiar, the day of cremation. We were like crows, we have become white like paddy birds. You, villagers, be our witnesses". This ends the formal part of the proceedings.

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The festival is concluded by further drinking and singing of chhatiar and other songs. It will be seen that there is no special or formal act done by the village people. They are invited for the occasion; the father (or his representative) implores the community to recognize the young ones as participators at the three great social occasions, and the people acknowledge this by drinking handi, the Santal mode of ratification. There is no kind of sacrifice at either janam or chacho chhatiar". [782]

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Adoption: Among the Santals to adopt a child is of rare occurrence. Dr. Campbell says they do not practise adoption. Rev. P.O. Bodding is of the opinion that adoption is present among the Santals. I have also heard of one or two instances of adoption in the Damin area of the Santhal Parganas.

If a man takes a second wife and this woman has a boy by a former husband, the man may adopt this boy. He proceeds in the following way: He first informs the village headman, then calls the nearest male relatives of the boy whose consent is necessary. If they agree they say so in the presence of the headman and the villagers of the village where the man, who will adopt the boy, lives. Then the male relatives

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cation. In many cases Bengali names that bear some resemblance to the form of the private name come into use. Thus Polo has become Padma Lochan and Kala has become Kalachand. Ernest Soren was known throughout the countryside by the name that he received at his baptism. At the time of his *chatiar* he was given the name of Singrai, this being the name of his paternal grandfather's elder brother. From the same time he was addressed as Jhongol, thus receiving not only the private name but the outer name of the same relative, who was not then alive. Before he could walk he was usually addressed as Thenta, a name that signifies a restless bundle of mischief. Later when he was growing up he was known by his contemporaries as Dangra Sorkar, or Sorkar for short. The name Sorkar is often applied to those who are going to school, but he was known as the "bullock" Sorkar because he did not conceal his fondness for beef, whereas educated Santals are generally supposed to conform to Hindu custom and shun it. Names of relatives are bestowed without regard to whether the relatives concerned are living or dead.

The village community takes no formal notice of the growing child after the performance of the *janam chatiar* until he is ready for the ceremony of initiation, or *caco chatiar*. *Caco* is a word that means a toddler, one who is learning to walk. The ceremony, however, is not performed until the child is growing up. It is somewhat misleading to describe the ceremony as one of initiation, for in comparison with the elaborate ritual with which initiation is accomplished in many parts of the world it is a pale and colourless proceeding. In the Bankura area the performance of the rite is of an extremely casual nature. It is nevertheless the equivalent for Santals of initiation ceremonies in other societies, and it retains its importance not because of the intrinsic character of the ritual but because of certain consequences that follow from its non-observance. Unless the *caco chatiar* has been performed, no Santal boy or girl may be married, nor cremated after death. It may be that the custom has been drastically modified because of the expense involved, as the whole village should be feasted. It is now customary for families to wait until the ceremony can be performed for several children at the same time, and it is therefore delayed until the impending marriage of the eldest child makes it inevitable. In the village of Barikul, Babulal recorded a case in which the father and the mother had been living together for some years without having themselves gone through any marriage ceremonial. For both of them it had

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been a second marriage, and as they were extremely poor their plea to set up house together had been allowed and the marriage celebration that had been postponed was indefinitely suspended. The time came when they wished to arrange a marriage for their eldest son and they found themselves involved in a difficulty. Until the formal celebration of their own marriage had taken place their son could not marry because in its absence they could not carry out the *caco chaṭiar* of their boy. The problem was solved by going through one of the permitted forms of marriage themselves, after which on the same day they performed the initiation of their three sons. They were scolded by the villagers who gathered for the occasion, but again pleaded their poverty.

The whole of the population of the village is invited for the ceremony, and each person must at the very least be given two cups of beer for each child on whose behalf the ceremony is being held. The feast for the whole village is not practicable except for a very few, and it is regarded as sufficient if the village officials are presented with a meal of rice and meat or chicken curry. If possible, the midwife who presided at the birth of the children bathes them in the courtyard by pouring water over them; and if she cannot, this is done by one of the old women present. Water is also sprinkled over the assembled guests. The *jog-mañjhi* recites the myth of Santal origins; beginning from the account of the creation of the world and the founding of the clans, he brings the story up to date by leading to the birth of the children in the particular family with which the villagers are at that moment concerned. Then there follows a dance in the courtyard, and songs are sung in honour of the family. The event is neither preceded nor followed by any period of instruction. Such materials as exist for comparing the institution in different parts of the Santal country suggest that possibly its observance is of greater importance in the north, particularly in the Santal Parganas. Bodding has described the ceremony, basing his account on the published Santali account of the traditions.[1] Recently a long and full account of the ceremonial has been published in Santali, and this account comes from the same area but does not include a description of an actual observance.[2] On the other hand, Mr. C. L. Mukherjea's account of Santal culture to the extreme south in the state of Mayurbhanj[3] omits all

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 132]

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Santals Dictionary*, Vol. I, p. 413.
[2] Stephen H. Murmu, *Karam ar Cero Chaṭiar*, Dumka, 1945.
[3] C. L. Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Calcutta, 1943.

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reference to the *caco chatiar*, which suggests that it is at the very least an inconspicuous element in the life of the area.

The universal custom among Santals of cicatrization of the boys and tattooing among girls may have been connected originally with initiation, though there is no evidence of any such connection in the past and it certainly does not exist at the present time. Boys make a number of self-inflicted burns on their left forearm. The resultant circular scars are usually five in number, but the only rule is that the number of scars must be an odd number, for the odd numbers signify life while even numbers mean death. There may be only one scar and there may be as many as seven. There is no ceremonial to accompany the practice and boys burn themselves as soon as they are old enough to understand the shame of the cowardice implied by the non-possession of the scars. They usually do it when they are out in the fields together herding the village cattle. A fire is lit and a small piece of rag is rolled and set alight. Each boy then presses the burning rag on to the skin of his left forearm as often as he wishes to do so, and the marks remain for life. The operation is known as *sika*. Santals believe that they will be known by these marks in the after-life and if they do not show them to the guardians of the next world they will be eaten by worms as "large as a foot-pedal rice husker". The same explanation is given for the custom of tattooing the girls.[1] Apart from this motive there is no evidence for a magico-religious basis of the practice. The term for tattooing is *khoda*, and girls must in all cases be tattooed before their marriage. The whole operation may not be completed at once, but may be spread over two or three cold seasons during which the tattooers carry on their work. In this area the work is done by women of one of the blacksmith castes who come from districts to the west. During the cold weather they go from one village to another, and they are, of course, paid for their work. The operation is performed with a long needle, and the dye consists of lampblack which is mixed with human milk—if possible with the milk of the tattooer. There is no relation between the designs and the clan to which the recipient belongs. Marks are tattooed on the temples, also on the side of the nose, on the cheeks and on the chin. Designs to look like necklaces are common, and sometimes there is a decorative belt round the waist. Arms are decorated as with bangles and armlets, and there may be a design on the back of

[1] W. Crooke (*Religion and Folklore in Northern India*, p. 196) alludes to the practice among other tribes and castes.